It was as though Fate had determined to keep Mr. Baldwin to his election pledge however hard he tried to break it. He had said that he would never be a party to substantial rearmament, and now that he wanted substantial rearmament, he could not procure it. As with Midas everything he touched turned to gold, so with Mr. Baldwin, everything he touched turned to peace. When Members of Parliament clamoured for a Co-ordinator of Defence, he could only give them Sir Thomas Inskip, spending weeks struggling to produce one who would inspire more confidence, but doomed at last to produce Sir Thomas, to the accompaniment of loud laughter. They asked for guns, and he gave them departmental credits; they asked for national security, and he gave them the collective security they had told their constituents they would ever uphold, but in their hearts believed, not unreasonably, to be most insecure.

Parliament, reflecting the mood of those it represented, gave an impression of waiting—like the elderly inmates of a private hotel waiting for the post, though they have no particular reason for expecting a letter; or waiting for evening to come and the blinds to be drawn, though they have no particular reason for preferring evening to day. A strange apathy was apparent, occasionally broken when some event, exceptionally violent, impelled attention. Then for a little while voices were raised demanding an explanation, prophesying woe, pleading that still it was not too late if only at this eleventh hour. . . . Soon this clamour died away, and the old apathy returned; the waiting, no one knew for what.

Days passed, and months, and the business of life proceeded;

money made and lost, newspapers appearing, attention con-
centrated now here, now there, now on this, now on that;
deaths noticed, Horatio Bottomley's, and the fact that it fell on
Derby Day pointed to by a clergyman as a fitting circumstance
in view of the deceased's services on behalf of that great national
event; Prince Yusopoff, in a witness box, describing to learned
judge, counsel and public how he and others had murdered
Rasputin and disposed of his massive corpse through a hole in